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Gero von S. Gaevernitz, Ex-OSS Agent, Dulles Aide

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Involved Personally

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Dr. Gero von Schulze Gaevernitz, 68, a former member of the Office of Strategic Services, Swiss Mission, and a close associate of the late Allen Dulles, died April 6 in the Canary Islands, where he was convalescing from an illness.

He was one of the few foreign-born U.S. citizens to receive the U.S. Medal of Freedom. He was cited for his World War II work as "the first American" to learn of German intentions to negotiate a surrender in Italy. "Thereafter he took part in the meetings held in Switzerland and Caserta, Italy, between representatives of the Allied Force Headquarters and the German emissaries," the citation continued. "His vigilance, tact and powers of persuasion contributed greatly to the successful outcome of the surrender negotiations."

Dulles wrote that Dr. von Gaevernitz's role as his deputy in Operation Sunrise resulted in the surrender of about 1 million men comprising the German forces in Italy and Southern Austria on May 2, 1945.

Remained in Switzerland

A German by birth, he was a naturalized U.S. citizen who had business and family holdings in Switzerland. His father, a professor and political scientist, was a member of the liberal wing of the former German Reichstag and helped draw up the Weimar Constitution.

He remained in Switzerland after war began in Europe in 1939 because he felt he might assist in liberating Europe from Hitler. He had developed excellent connections—through his family and his personality—with members of the underground opposition to Hitler within Germany, and traveled frequently between Switzerland and Germany, while America was neutral, to build up these connections.

Dr. von Gaevernitz believed that Nazism had not permeated Germany as thoroughly as many believed, and was convinced that there were people within the German military and in high civilian positions ready to support overthrowing Hitler.

He was involved personally in arranging and participating in practically all conferences and discussions that led to signing the surrender by German representatives at Caserta.

William J. Donovan, former director of Strategic Services,

wrote Dr. von Gaevernitz in 1945: "Your knowledge of resistance in Germany, your cooperation in the early discovery of the German experimental center in secret weapons on the Baltic Sea, resulting in its subsequent destruction, your penetration of the Abwehr and your part in the surrender of the German Army in Italy are only a few of your achievements."

Field Marshal Harold Alexander, supreme Allied commander in the Mediterranean in 1945, told Dr. von Gaevernitz he felt the unconditional surrender "not only started the collapse of the Nazis in Europe, but also saved untold Allied soldiers' lives."

Services and burial were in Lugano, Switzerland.

He leaves two sisters, Mrs. Marga v. S. Gaevernitz of Ascona, Switzerland, and Ruth v. S. Gaevernitz of Freiberg.